

Positive Leadership in Project Management¹

Leading Digital Transformation²

By Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow

Most business's today, and most governments and non-profit organizations are managing through, or initiating some form of Digital Transformation. Digital Transformation can be defined as the process of assessing existing technology, identifying gaps or areas for improvement in the delivery of services and products to stakeholders, and utilizing modern technology to create new services, modify existing processes, change the culture of an organization and enhance the customer/ stakeholder experience.

That is quite a definition and it clearly indicates, or raises the awareness of, the complexity of a Digital Transformation Project or Program.

According to Tim Vaughn, <https://www.poppulo.com/>, there are four main areas of Digital Transformation:

- **Process Transformation.** Modifying the elements of an organization's business processes in order to achieve new strategic and operational goals
- **Business Model Transformation** – Reviewing the current model and innovating to create a new business model. A reinvention of the organization's approach to providing services and changing existing services to meet the continually evolving needs of their customers. Becoming more flexible and agile in how an organization does business.
- **Domain Transformation** – New technologies that are becoming available can provide the ability to redefine products and services offered by an organization. This is a crossing over of traditional industry boundaries into new areas and creating new opportunities for more non-traditional competition. Non-traditional competition is

¹This article is one in a series on Positive Leadership in Project Management by Frank Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow, popular speaker and author of books on leadership in project management published by Wiley and IIL in the United States. Frank is widely known as the originator of the International Project Management Day, the annual celebrations and educational events conducted each November by PMI members, chapters and organizations around the world. Learn more in his profile at the end of this article.

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basically an approach that breaks any existing “rules” about how to compete. Offering a service that is not considered part of an organization’s “normal” and accepted practices. Literally bringing the saying “coming out of left field” to life.

- Cultural/Organizational Transformation - A successful digital transformation is much more updating technology, building new infrastructure, or redesigning products. It requires an organization to align the transformation with its internal values and behaviors. It requires leadership to shift a mind set and create an organization that is adaptive, agile, and flexible to change as the world business environment changes.

Leading Digital Transformation requires the organization’s Leadership Team to be 100% Change ready and to establish a change readiness attitude among the entire organization. A rethinking of strategy is necessary.

If we look more closely at the strategic elements or domains of Digital Transformation, according to David L. Rogers in his book “The Digital Transformation Playbook”, Columbia Business School Publishing, there are 5 Domains of Strategy involved in Digital Transformation:

- Customers
- Competition
- Data
- Innovation
- Value

Leaders must focus on each of these domains if they are to remain competitive and sustain their organizations.

Today’s customers are very well connected and network constantly. They are actually shaping and influencing the brands they use through their interaction with an organization. This means that organizations have to change the way they market their services. What we have today is a dynamic, networked and connected customer base that communicates extensively through social media and they have created what can be described as large customer focus group. Organizations must pay attention to the dialog in these groups. These focus groups provide key information about customer behaviors and changing needs.

The domain of completion requires an organization to reassess how it competes. It may be necessary to partner with longtime rivals and collaborate to offer new products and customer support systems that create another value stream. The evolving digital world will create an environment where there is less distinction between partners and rivals

The domain of Data requires an organization to assess how it produces, manages, analyzes, and utilizes information. More focus on taking big data and breaking it down into highly useful strategic insights that can be acted upon. Becoming excellent in the used of data allows an organization to uncover new opportunities, see trends early, and detect unexpected or new patterns in business activities.

Innovation is another domain that requires a boost in many organizations. Digital transformation provides an organization with the ability to test ideas more quickly, obtain market feedback faster, and test product decisions with customers through real time validation.

Value is probably the most important domain as an organization leads Digital Transformation. A value proposition was, in the past, considered to be a constant. It was set and was the basis for how an organization performed and served its customers. In the digital business world, the value proposition must continually evolve, Technology and customer needs and attitudes are changing more rapidly than ever before. An unchanging value proposition will become a target for competitors. Make it a point to review and, as needed, adjust the value proposition to match the changing business environment. This reminds me of the book by Marshal Goldsmith – What Got You here Won't Get You There.

Digital Transformation is a significant change initiative and it requires Business Savvy leaders who can harness the energy and knowledge of their employees and team members along with the data obtained through market analysis and customer feedback and behavior. Digital Transformation will be different for each organization and its complexity will be determined by the strategic decisions of the leadership.

About the Author



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Frank P. Saladis, PMP, PMI Fellow is the Owner/Founder of Blue Marble Enterprises Inc. and Project Imaginers. Frank is an accomplished leader and contributor in the discipline of project management. He is the author of 12 published books, the past editor of the All PM Newsletter and the author of over 160 project management articles. Frank provides training and consulting internationally and has educated and entertained countless audiences with a special blend of project management knowledge and tasteful humor. He is also an experienced and well-known project management instructor and consultant and a member of the PMI® Seminars World team of trainers. Mr. Saladis' 35 year career includes 28.5 years with AT&T, 3 years with Cisco Systems, and more than 25 years as a professional trainer, facilitator, mentor and keynote speaker.

Frank is the Originator/Founder of International Project Management Day which launched in 2004 and has been growing in recognition yearly. The goal of International Project Management Day is the worldwide recognition of the many project managers and project teams in every industry including nonprofit organizations and health care who contribute their time, energy, creativity, innovation, and countless hours to deliver products, services, facilities, and provide emergency and disaster recovery services in every city and community around the world.

Frank was PMI's 2006 Person of the Year. Frank is a Project Management Professional, a graduate from the PMI Leadership Institute Master's class, and has contributed significantly to the organization's growth and knowledge base for more than 20 years. His leadership activity within PMI included the position of President of the New York City PMI chapter from 1991-2001, President of the Assembly of Chapter Presidents, and Chair of the Education and Training Specific Interest Group. He received the high honor of the "PMI Fellow Award" in October 2013 and received the very prestigious "PMI Distinguished Contribution Award" in October 2015.

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